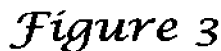


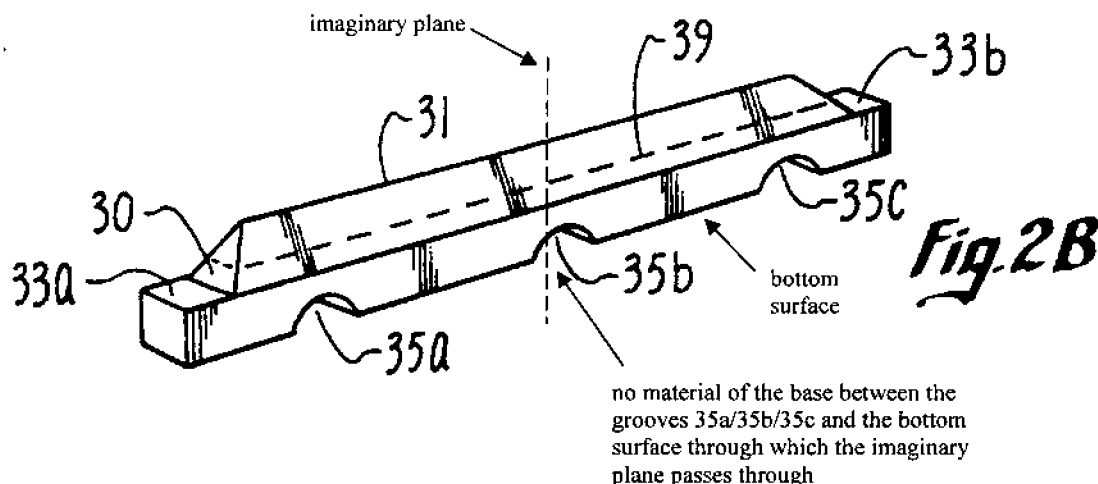
Applicant has carefully reviewed the Final Office Action mailed on December 12, 2009, and the Advisory Action mailed February 18, 2010, prior to preparing this response. Currently, claims 17-27 are pending, wherein claims 17-20, 22-23, 25 and 27 stand rejected, and claims 21, 24 and 26 have been withdrawn consequent a Examiner-initiated restriction requirement. Claim 17 has been amended and claims 28-30 have been added with this paper. Support for these amendments may be found, for example, at lines 3-23 of page 12 and FIGS. 3 and 4 of the application as originally filed. No new matter has been added. Favorable consideration of the above amendments and following remarks is respectfully requested.

Claims 17, 18 and 20 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Vigil et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,320,634) in view of Larmour (U.S. Pat. No. 2,237,152) or Most (U.S. Pat. No. 2,127,043). Applicant respectfully traverses the rejection.

Claim 17, as currently amended, recites that the base of the metallic cutting blade includes an interlocking structure defined by a plurality of openings formed in the metallic cutting blade along the base such that an imaginary plane perpendicular to the longitudinal axis which passes through one of the plurality of openings also passes through material of the base located between the opening and the lower surface of the base. Claim 17 additionally recites positioning the cutting blade adjacent the joining member so that the interlocking structure is submerged within and interlocked with the joining member. One example of this claimed configuration can be seen in the annotated version of FIG. 3 of the instant specification, shown below.



Such a configuration is not taught by the cited combination. Namely, Figure 2B of Vigil et al. appears to disclose semi-circular grooves 35a/b/c formed in the base 37 of an atherotome 28. It can be appreciated that by virtue of the grooves 35a/b/c being semicircular, none of the grooves 35a/b/c provide for a portion of the material of the base to be located between the grooves 35a/b/c and the lower surface of the base 37. FIG. 2B of Vigil et al. is reproduced below to further illustrate this point.



For at least this reason, Applicant respectfully submits that Vigil et al. does not appear to teach or suggest the claimed interlocking structure that interlocks with the joining member. Larmour and/or Most fail to overcome the shortcomings of Vigil et al. Consequently, Applicant respectfully submits that claim 17 is patentable over the cited art. Because claims 18 and 20 depend from claim 17 and add additional limitations, they are also patentable over the cited combination. Withdrawal of the rejection is respectfully requested.

Claim 19 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Vigil et al. and Larmour or Most as applied to claims 17, 18 and 20 above, and further in view of Lim et al. (U.S. Patent No. 7,147,619). As set forth above, Applicant respectfully submits that claim 17 is patentable over Vigil et al. and Larmour or Most. Lim et al. fail to overcome the shortcomings of the cited art. Consequently, Applicant respectfully submits that claim 17 is patentable over Vigil et al., Larmour or Most, and Lim et al., to the extent that such combinations are even possible. Withdrawal of the rejection is respectfully requested.

Claims 22 and 23 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Vigil et al. and Larmour or Most as applied to claims 17, 18 and 20 above, and further in view of Forman et al. (U.S. Pat. No. 5,514,092). As indicated above, Applicant respectfully submits that claim 17 is patentable over Vigil et al. and Larmour or Most. Forman et al. fail to overcome the shortcomings of the cited art. Consequently, Applicant respectfully submits that claim 17 is patentable over Vigil et al., Larmour or Most, and Forman et al., to the extent that such combinations are even possible. Withdrawal of the rejection is respectfully requested.

Claim 25 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Vigil et al. and Larmour or Most as applied to claims 17, 18 and 20 above, and further in view of Radisch, Jr. (U.S. Patent Pub. No. US 2003/0040770). As set forth above, Applicant respectfully submits that claim 17 is patentable over Vigil et al. and Larmour or Most. Radisch, Jr. fails to overcome the shortcomings of the cited art. Consequently, Applicant respectfully submits that claim 17 is patentable over Vigil et al., Larmour or Most, and Radisch, Jr., to the extent that such combinations are even possible. Withdrawal of the rejection is respectfully requested.

Claim 27 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Vigil et al. and Larmour or Most as applied to claims 17, 18 and 20 above, and further in view of Obara et al. (U.S. Pat. No. 4,581,513) or Gray et al. (U.S. Pat. No. 5,895,406). As set forth above, Applicant respectfully submits that claim 17 is patentable over Vigil et al. and Larmour or Most. Neither Obara et al. nor Gray et al. overcome the shortcomings of the cited art. Consequently, Applicant respectfully submits that claim 17 is patentable over Vigil et al., Larmour or Most, and Obara et al. or Gray et al., to the extent that such combinations are even possible. Withdrawal of the rejection is respectfully requested.

New Claims

Claims 28-30 have been added with this amendment. Support for these claims may be found, for example, at lines 3-23 of page 12 and FIGS. 3 and 4 of the application as originally filed. No new matter has been added. Claims 28-30, which depend from claim 17 and which add additional limitations, are believed patentable over the cited combinations of references for at least the reasons stated above. Favorable consideration of these claims is respectfully requested.

Conclusion

Reconsideration and further examination of the rejections are respectfully requested. It is respectfully submitted that all pending claims are now in condition for allowance. Issuance of a Notice of Allowance in due course is requested. If a telephone conference might be of assistance, please contact the undersigned attorney at (612) 677-9050.

Respectfully submitted,

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By his Attorney,

Date: March 24, 2010



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